

VZCZCXRO0762
PP RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #1606/01 1771628
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 261628Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6233
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC
RHFMISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME 0010
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP/ASD-HD//
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001606

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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USDA FOR FAS/OA, FAS/DLP, FAS/ICD AND FAS/ITP
USDA FOR APHIS
USDA FOR WAYNE MOLSTAD/OSEC
USAID/W FOR AFR/WA ANGELA LOZANO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [EAID](#) [AMED](#) [EAGR](#) [NI](#) [AVIANFLU](#)

SUBJECT: JUNE 26 NIGERIA AVIAN FLU UPDATE - NO HUMAN CASES?

REF: LAGOS 811

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. The GON AI Steering Committee met June 14 for the first time since April 20. Nigeria will issue permits to four major poultry producers to import grandparent birds for restocking and will discuss possibly permitting poultry vaccinations. Nigeria does not yet have a system for disseminating AI-preventive information to the people. A Ministry of Health official said in the death of a young girl, "We strongly suspect" she had "all the symptoms" of AI. The Minister of Health contradicted him immediately, saying, "From all available evidence" and as a result of Nigerians' prayers, "we have had no human cases of AI." The Charge' d'Affaires delivered talking points urging the GON to take steps against AI. The Minister of State for Agriculture gave the GON four weeks to produce an integrated AI plan for the short, medium, and long terms. End summary.

¶2. (U) The Government of Nigeria (GON) Avian Influenza (AI) Steering Committee met on June 14 for the first time since April 20. The committee is composed of the ministers of health, agriculture, and information. Representatives of UN agencies, the European Union, the UK High Commission, and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) attended.

¶3. (U) The chief veterinary officer (CVO) said the GON still did not know how AI entered Nigeria. The government would issue permits to four major poultry producers to import grandparent birds for restocking, and the GON would discuss possibly permitting poultry vaccinations. A Ministry of Health (MOH) official listed concerns including premature, improperly carried out restocking; the delayed payment of compensation; and the source of the initial outbreak, which he said probably was not wild birds. There "certainly" was a need for the GON to review its policy on compensation. The CVO said the government would not compensate any farmer who restocked illegally.

¶4. (U) An MOH official said the GON still needed an action plan to include preparing a pandemic response plan (not yet

done) and an action plan to improve public information for citizens on the threat of AI. In acting against AI, Nigeria must do at the state and local-government level what it is doing at the federal level. The Minister of Health said more work was needed in coordinating at the state and local-government levels; that the GON must review its policy on compensation, including restocking; and that the GON must ask itself whether all current poultry farmers should remain in this occupation. Poultry farmers should be exempted from paying for culling and AI-related veterinary services at the state level. The GON did not have an integrated AI plan involving the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Information.

15. (SBU) A World Health Organization (WHO) official said her main concern was not action by the GON, but rather that Nigeria's state and local governments act effectively against AI. A DIFD official said the main problem currently is Nigeria's inability to spend at the state level AI money that was already available.

16. (SBU) The Minister of Health said Nigerians believed AI no longer was a threat, and that a media campaign was needed to counter this impression. The Minister of State for Health said Nigeria did not yet have a system for disseminating AI-preventive information to the people. The Ministry of Information reported it had issued 21 news bulletins on AI outbreaks since February 7, when the virus was first reported in Nigeria.

Disagreement Over Human AI Cases

17. (SBU) A WHO official said, "We may be missing human cases of AI in Nigeria, but we just don't know." The MOH's leading official on AI cited the case of a young girl who

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died, and whose father worked on the AI-affected Sambawa Farm in Jaji, in Kaduna State. She died of an influenza-like illness, but no autopsy was carried out. The official said, "We strongly suspect" the girl had "all the symptoms" of AI. The Minister of Health contradicted him immediately, saying, "From all available evidence" and as a result of Nigerians' prayers, "we have had no human cases of AI."

U.S. Charge' d'Affaires Urges Action

18. (U) The Charge' d'Affaires was the only foreign chief of mission present. She delivered talking points that urged the GON to take steps including strengthened surveillance and reporting on animals and humans, an effective compensation policy, and increased cooperation between all levels of government in Nigeria and the poultry industry.

19. (SBU) The Minister of Health was not aware that the ECOWAS Regional Ministerial Meeting on the Harmonization of AI Control Policies and Strategies in West Africa was to meet June 20-23 in Abuja. The Minister of State for Agriculture gave the three ministries four weeks to produce for the GON AI Technical Committee (to include the Ministry of Science and Technology) an integrated AI plan for the short, medium, and long terms. The Minister of Health, as leader of the AI Steering Committee, decided it henceforth would meet every two weeks. (Comment: The minister originally wanted to meet weekly, but every two weeks is more realistic considering Nigerian ministries' lack of "bench strength" on the issue of AI. End comment.)

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